



Prairie Song

Nebraska Regional Newsletter

Featured Illustrator



TIM HANTULA
WWW.TIMHANTULA.COM

Tim Hantula won the Indi-500 Illustration contest in January! Congrats, Tim!

Upcoming Events

Shop Talk - Monday evenings, 7:30-8:30pm CT

Feb 25 - Meet & Pitch - Watch your email for details.

March 2 - Meet & Pitch - Watch your email for details.

March 3 - Yuko Shimizu webinar True Tales—The Story of Yuko Shimizu

Spotlight

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A Word From Our Regional Team

It's hard to believe, but Regional Advisor Alison Pearce Stevens is reaching the end of her first five-year term. What does that mean? It means any member interested in holding the RA position will have the opportunity to apply. Watch your inbox for an email from Alison detailing the process in early March.

A Word from Our Regional Team



Chloe Burgett
Illustrator Coordinator

Have you ever made a work of art that became your teacher?

I didn't realize I had, until I went to the opening session of the SCBWI Winter Conference, a keynote by Brian Selznick. Brian's work is meticulous and detail heavy. His studio has a wall entirely covered in his original pieces, which he finishes one at a time as he works through illustrated novels. This is a person that draws every day, who completes hundreds of drawings per book sometimes. My mind pictures Brian as a huge creative train full of forward motion and power.

He shared about midway through the session that when the pandemic hit in 2020, he couldn't make any art. All his momentum was just gone. As if the tracks disappeared and his train sat in the sand, unmoving. He just didn't feel like drawing. (How relatable!)

He showed images of art made by the children in neighboring apartments on windows. One child wrote "Let's make art." A piece of train track reappeared.

He couldn't draw, so he found the courage to paint. In this season, Brian made 4 pieces of art that became his teachers. They were four abstract works, each inspired by different colors and flowers. Big, bold square canvases flowed with tangled clouds and petal shapes. What struck me about these pieces was how Brian described his creative process as listening to his intuition. When all momentum was lost, he got quiet and listened to his inner voice to guide him where to go next.

Two summers ago I made 7 pieces of art that have been my teachers, so I know what Brian means. These were not pieces to "get an agent," to "sell my next story," or "something just to post." These were pieces from my inner voice, something I had to make for myself. It involved hours of reflection, list making, and meditation. They showed me what to make next, and whether my subsequent works were a distraction or on track with where I wanted to go.

If Brian Selznick is a powerful train, I think maybe I'm something like a tramway car or maybe a zipline at a summer camp. Even so, we all have an inner creative voice to be true to. The only way I know how to listen to this voice is to keep making art.

Chloe Burgett
Illustrator Coordinator



Craft Corner



There are two easels in the studio, generally employed at the same time. There are numerous notebooks, and, perhaps most importantly, paper taped down to the work table—not as protection—but as a ready tablet to jot ideas, test color, note a phone number, figure sales tax, translate something into or out of Italian, cut apart, glue, or draw when there are no words.

Frequently when I hear the word craft, I wonder which meaning? The blank piece of paper on my table, the empty page in the notebook, the gessoed panel on the easel are vessels for ideas waiting to embark on a creative journey. The product of the sweaty work of creativity may be the journey's end, but it takes skill and cunning, relationship and blind luck, too. All of those qualities are among the definitions of craft.

In December I was able to work with the artists/residents at Quality Living in Omaha. The residents are adults who have experienced brain or spinal trauma and their creative process often requires assistance, particularly hand-over-hand assistance. I say that in the most literal sense—one hand over another, bending fingers, gripping a brush, cutting, gluing, laying out the pattern. It requires listening acutely and, when there are no words, listening with your eyes, your heart, your gut.

We made winter dioramas, adapting the materials and methods in ways to make it possible for them to have authority over their work. When we finished, they told stories about their characters. To take an idea and make it real is so powerful. To give it a story and a shape that is at once solid and ethereal is a marvel.

As authors and illustrators we take our ideas on what seems like an impossible journey. We wrestle with them, sometimes needing—or, at least, longing for—the hand-over-hand help of a colleague, agent, editor, or art director. Our ideas made real are a power and a marvel we share with our readers.

Paula Wallace



see more of Paula's work at paulawallacefineart.com

Let's Celebrate



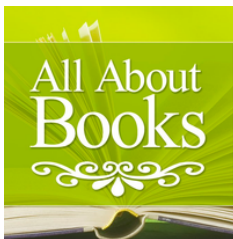
Congrats to the winners of the Indi-500 writing and illustrating contest: Congratulations to **Judith Snyder** and **Kathleen Gadeken**, who will both get a critique from Laura Godwin. Applause please for **Timothy James Hantula** who won the Indi-500 illustrator contest! Tim gets a portfolio review from Macmillan's Sharismar Rodriguez.



Local Author Day for Children's Authors Event February 19 at The Bookworm, 2501 S. 90th St., in Omaha will include a meet & greets with several SCBWI Nebraska authors! [Click here](#) to see the full schedule.



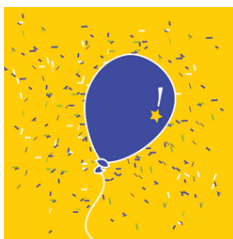
WOW! Way to go! **Alison Pearce Stevens** sold her middle grade nonfiction book, *Animal Climate Heroes: Critters Combating Climate Change*, to Laura Godwin at Godwin Books/Henry Holt, for publication in spring 2023.



And that's not all! **Alison Pearce Stevens** is on a roll! She was interviewed by Lincoln City Libraries head librarian, Pat Leach, for the [All About Books](#) podcast on Nebraska Public Media. You can listen to the full interview [here](#). Way to go Alison!



Three cheers for **Chloe Burgett's** third book deal! Chloe will illustrate *Potatoes for Pirate Pearl*, written by debut author Jennifer Concepcion, and acquired by Feeding Minds Press. The book is about a pirate who's sick of hardtack biscuits and ends up on Farmer Fay's potato farm. Publication is slated for winter 2023.



Kelly Brakenhoff and fellow SCBWI Nebraska illustrator **Theresa Murray** just completed their first Kickstarter campaign in January. Their project successfully funded offset printing for hardcover copies of their forthcoming book, *My Dawg Koa (Duke the Deaf Dog ASL Series #3)*. Way to go, Kelly and Theresa!

Let's Celebrate continued



Congrats to [BettyAnn VanDeventer](#) who won a free webinar at the December Shop Talk!

Each time you attend a Monday night [Shop Talk](#), your name is added to the free-webinar drawing held every other month!

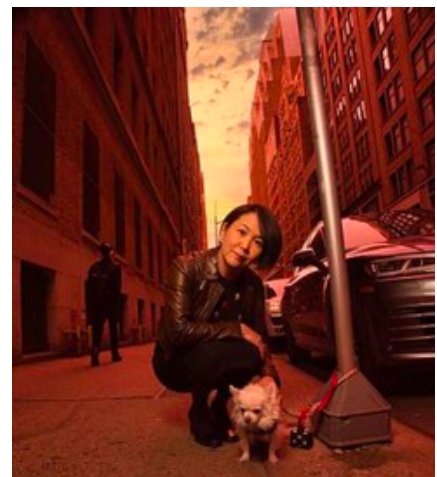


[Timothy James Hantula](#) designed the cover for [Hope Bolinger's](#) new book *The Cassandra Curse*, published by Chicken Scratch Books. Looks amazing, Tim!

Coming Attractions

Got a great idea for illustrating and/or writing a tale based on world-news-worthy events in a way that's appropriate for children? You won't want to miss this [March 3 webinar with Yuko Shimizu](#), a Japanese illustrator based in New York City. Yuko, a Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator, will share her journey in developing poignant visual story-telling.

Yuko is the author/illustrator of *The Cat Man of Aleppo*, a true story of ambulance driver Mohammad Alaa Aljaleel, who through social media and word-of-mouth founded a sanctuary for stray cats and other abandoned animals during the Syrian Civil War. Read more at [True Tales—The Story of Yuko Shimizu](#) and join us for the March 3, 7:30-9pm CST webinar.





WINNERS!



Each participant got one theme word and two prompt words to include in their written story or illustration. This year the theme word was TRUST, and the two prompt words were STUDY and CHOICE. Below are the winners, as judged by neighboring regions' SCBWI Regional Advisors and Illustrator Coordinators. Congrats and thank you to everyone that entered and made a fun new piece!



Timothy James Hantula
www.timhantula.com



WINNERS!



MUDABBIR

by Kathleen Gaden

It was the time of year when goats climb to the top of old mountains. Goats everywhere were getting ready. Shining hoofs, brushing coats and stretching.

Mudabbir was busy too. He was knee deep in maps. Determined to find the best way to get up that steep slope.

"C'mon Mudabbir" his friends called, "Let's GO!"

"I can't yet. I haven't found the safest route."

They did not wait for him.

He continued to study. It got late.

Then it got dark.

Sea Magic

by Judith Snyder

A morning fog stroked its fingers across the windows, leaving water droplets to race down the glass. Emma turned to her young cousin who sat pouting in front of the fireplace.

"Come on, Annie. Let's walk on the beach." Emma pulled her jacket over her head and grabbed her bag.

"No, the sea is scary, and a shark will eat me. I'm staying here till Momma gets back."

Emma laughed. "I won't let a shark eat you." Bending down, she looked into Annie's eyes.

"Trust me, we'll have fun."

"Promise?"

"I promise," said Emma.

[download and read the full winning stories!](#)

Maximizing Your Membership

Bored with virtual meetings? Does the mere mention of Zoom turn you off? Don't give up! Click on [SCBWI's Regional Virtual Events](#) for a quick peek at the new opportunities waiting for you. SCBWI regions offer affordable (think very inexpensive--and sometimes free!) events with Kidlit professionals from around the globe. Even better, you can go in your sweats!

Of course, if we were to recommend one (we're not!), it would be Nebraska's March 3 virtual event: True Tales featuring Yuko Shimizu, the Caldecott Honor-winning Illustrator. It's a steal at \$15 for members. There are Kidlit experts waiting to help resolve your illustrating or writing problems and to make your work sparkle!



Chloe Burgett
www.chloebartistry.com

Nebraska Discussion Board

Are you looking for someone to critique your hook, pitch, logline, or query letter?

Search no more!

You will find one or more of your Nebraska Kidlit colleagues to share their expertise.

Post your work on our Nebraska Discussion Board.

[Click here to post.](#) (Log in first!)



Illustration Submission

Would you like for your art to be featured in our future newsletter?

Please send to: Chloe Burgett at nebraska-ic@scbwi.org

Label file as `firstname_lastname.jpeg`. (no bigger than 8 mb)



Shop Talk Recap



A summary of the Shop Talk discussion led by Shelly Nosbisch on Constructing a Scene

Written by Ashley Karges

How do you define a scene? A scene can be any action that is moving a story forward. For picture books, a scene can simply be one sentence. All writers can benefit from fine-tuning their scene-writing. The following tips and tools can show us how.

First, a scene should do at least one of the following:

1. Dramatically illustrate a character's progress toward a goal or provide an expectation. (Goal)
2. Bring a character into conflict with opposing forces. (Motivation)
3. Provide the character with an experience that strengthens his motivation. (Conflict)

It is possible for a scene to do all three of these simultaneously, but it should do at least one.

In addition, every scene should show movement. If it doesn't, why is it in your book? What is the scene's purpose? Reasons you may choose to include a scene could be to introduce a suspect, reveal clues, or provide romantic tension in YA manuscripts; for comic relief, foreshadowing or pacing purposes; or to establish or betray trust between characters. Any reason is fine, as long as you—the author—can show movement.

Take a moment to examine a scene from one of your works in progress. Identify whether your scene shows Goal, Motivation, or Conflict. What are two other reasons you included this scene?

Keep it simple. When constructing a scene, begin with an objective. What does the character plan or hope for in this scene? It doesn't have to be the overall story goal. It can be something as simple as finding the restroom, for example. Next, give the character an obstacle to overcome. How do they pivot? What changes for them in the process? Finally, provide a new objective. Based on the outcome of the conflict, your character will have a new plan going forward.

In other words, ask yourself:

- Who... (which character)
- What... (wants something)
- Because... (why)
- But... (can't get it)
- So... (change of plan)

If you have trouble summarizing the scene using this format, then something is missing.

Good luck constructing those scenes! For more info on scenes, check out the book GMC: Goal, Motivation & Conflict by Debra Dixon.

Ashley Karges

Take Flight With Help From Our Volunteers



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Credits: Fall 2021 Texas Woman's University Community-focused Design Studio
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Feature Title Designers: Kelly Milliorn, Edgar Obregon, Susana Pina, Amanda Tritschler-Tucker | Teaser Layout Designer: Roshad Bonner
Art Director: Professor Sheli Petersen